

What Is Claimed Is:

1 1. A method for managing security policies in a distributed
2 computing system, wherein security policies determine access rights to a
3 computer application, the method comprising:
4 creating a plurality of security policies, wherein each security policy
5 specifies a level of security for the distributed computing system;
6 distributing the plurality of security policies to each computer in the
7 distributed computing system;
8 selecting a specific security policy from the plurality of security policies
9 for use across the distributed computing system; and
10 informing each computer in the distributed computing system to use the
11 specific security policy.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the level of security includes a
2 specific security posture.

1 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising using secure
2 communications for distributing the plurality of security policies to each computer
3 in the distributed computing system.

1 4. The method of claim 1, further comprising signing each security
2 policy in the plurality of security policies with a cryptographic signature to allow
3 detection of unauthorized changes.

1 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising distributing the plurality
2 of security policies from a computer in the distributed computing system to a
3 subordinate computer.

1 6. The method of claim 1, wherein selecting the specific security
2 policy for use includes selecting the specific security policy based on a security
3 posture.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein informing each computer in the
2 distributed computing system to use the specific security policy includes using
3 secure communications for distributing the security posture indicator to each
4 computer in the distributed computing system.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of security policies
2 includes a default security policy, wherein the default security policy is selected
3 by a computer within the distributed computing system if the specific security
4 policy is defective on that host.

1 9. A computer-readable storage medium storing instructions that
2 when executed by a computer cause the computer to perform a method for
3 managing security policies in a distributed computing system, wherein security
4 policies determine access rights to a computer application, the method
5 comprising:

6 creating a plurality of security policies, wherein each security policy
7 specifies a level of security for the distributed computing system;

8 distributing the plurality of security policies to each computer in the
9 distributed computing system;

10 selecting a specific security policy from the plurality of security policies
11 for use across the distributed computing system; and
12 informing each computer in the distributed computing system to use the
13 specific security policy.

1 10. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the
2 level of security includes a specific security posture.

1 11. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the
2 method further comprises using secure communications for distributing the
3 plurality of security policies to each computer in the distributed computing
4 system.

1 12. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the
2 method further comprises signing each security policy in the plurality of security
3 policies with a cryptographic signature to allow detection of unauthorized
4 changes.

1 13. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the
2 method further comprises distributing the plurality of security policies from a
3 computer in the distributed computing system to a subordinate computer.

1 14. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein
2 selecting the specific security policy for use includes selecting the specific
3 security policy based on a security posture.

1 15. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein
2 informing each computer in the distributed computing system to use the specific
3 security policy includes using secure communications for distributing the security
4 posture to each computer in the distributed computing system.

1 16. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the
2 plurality of security policies includes a default security policy, wherein the default
3 security policy is selected by a computer within the distributed computing system
4 if the specific security policy is defective on that host.

1 17. An apparatus that facilitates managing security policies in a
2 distributed computing system, wherein security policies determine access rights to
3 a computer application, the apparatus comprising:
4 a creating mechanism configured to create a plurality of security policies,
5 wherein each security policy specifies a level of security for the distributed
6 computing system;
7 a distributing mechanism configured to distribute the plurality of security
8 policies to each computer in the distributed computing system;
9 a selecting mechanism configured to select a specific security policy from
10 the plurality of security policies for use across the distributed computing system;
11 and
12 an informing mechanism configured to inform each computer in the
13 distributed computing system to use the specific security policy.

1 18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the level of security includes a
2 specific security posture.

1 19. The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising a secure
2 communications mechanism that is configured to distribute the plurality of
3 security policies to each computer in the distributed computing system.

1 20. The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising a signing
2 mechanism that is configured to sign each security policy in the plurality of
3 security policies with a cryptographic signature to allow detection of unauthorized
4 changes.

1 21. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the distributing mechanism is
2 further configured to distribute the plurality of security policies from a computer
3 in the distributed computing system to a subordinate computer.

1 22. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the selecting mechanism
2 includes a policy selecting mechanism that is configured to select the specific
3 security policy based on the security posture.

1 23. The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the informing mechanism
2 includes a secure communications mechanism for distributing the security posture
3 to each computer in the distributed computing system.

1 24. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the plurality of security
2 policies includes a default security policy, wherein the default security policy is
3 selected by a computer within the distributed computing system if the specific
4 security policy is defective on that host.